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HONDURAS

SNAPSHOT

Revising NGOs Agendas with a Focus on Security

Search for a vision to transform insecurity



Photo: Honduras Convive! Program
Community Consultations held by
Committee Facilitator

***“As PDA we seek a shared
visión. This vision is to
coordinate actions of all
institutions, especially
strengthen the state bodies,
which has resulted in reducing
violent acts in the target
communities”***

- PDA Manager-

Telling Our Story

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Of the thirteen thousand NGOs operating in Honduras, in areas of health, infrastructure, education, and violence prevention, only a few include violence reduction in their mission statements. Most NGOs and donor agencies refuse to work in extremely high risk communities and prohibit a link between their programs and violence and police involvement. Those that do prioritize conflict areas focus entirely on prevention.

For OTI/Honduras Convive!, one of the main challenges has been the identification of partners willing to incorporate violence reduction and interruption as a priority.

An early experience was working with World Vision's regional office *Programa de Desarrollo de Area* (PDA) – Cerro de Plata. This PDA operates in the dangerous San Miguel District of Tegucigalpa, which is controlled by gangs. For years the PDA operated based on a long-term plan with clear development goals that were not easily adapted to the security situation of partner communities. However, over months of frequent discussion with World Vision, it became apparent to them that unless they directly addressed security concerns faced by their partner communities, they would be unable to accomplish their community development goals.

This realization was the key to their transformation to intentionally focus on security, including working with the police, which before they had policies prohibiting. Honduras Convive! field staff supported and guided them in this process to: 1) Promote a conceptual shift among staff regarding the need to address violence rather than working around it, 2) Invite other public and private institutions in the communities to jointly discuss and analyze citizen security needs as part of the community's development needs, 3) Create an Action Committee with representatives from the government, the police, private sector and NGOs to drive community-based initiatives to improve security, and 4) Define a strategy for the Committee, in which the PDA acted as a catalyst for immediate actions to improve security. World Vision subsequently revised their national policies to incorporate joint efforts with the police to tackle insecurity as part of their operating model.

The experience with the World Vision PDA, which for years had shied away from working directly on security issues, demonstrated that Honduras Convive! program is able to work with NGOs to change how they view their work in conflict areas. The program confirmed that a change in NGO partners' conceptual thinking from pure prevention to violence interruption is in fact possible. The experience with World Vision gave program staff confidence and tools to directly engage in helping other groups make this shift and continue engaging with them to convincingly make the case that not tackling security issues directly is to risk developmental irrelevance.